Report from IASA 2.0 Virtual Workshops

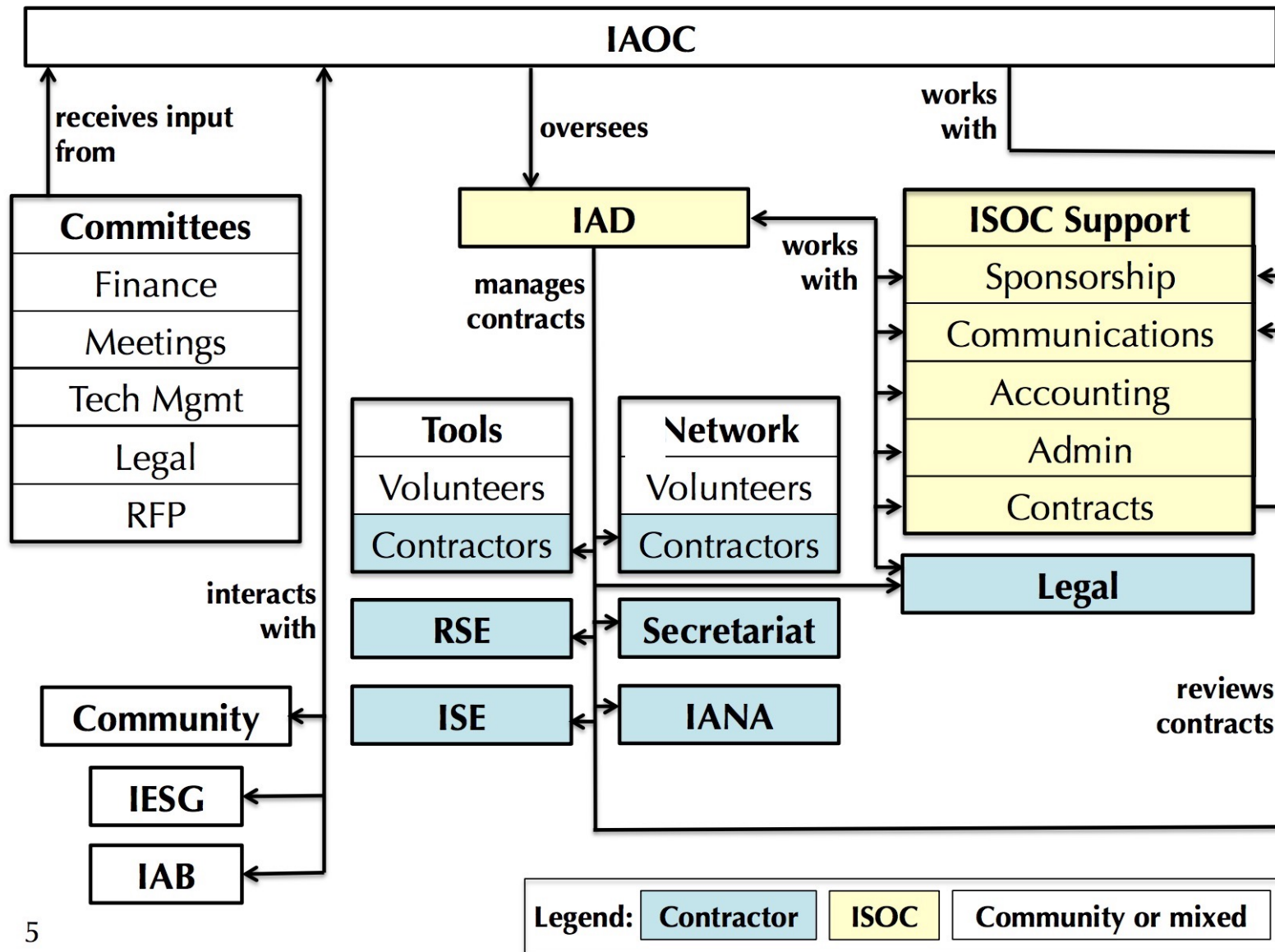Joseph Lorenzo Hall   A. Jean Mahoney

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Outline

- Terminology and Organizational Structure

- Issues Raised (listed in order of perceived importance):

  - Structural and Organizational Issues

  - Funding Issues

  - Transparency and Communication Issues

  - Staff and Volunteer Resource Issues

  - Internal IAOC Organizational Issues

Terminology

- **IASA:** "IETF Administrative Support Activity" - An organized activity that provides administrative support for the IETF, the IAB and the IESG.

- **IAOC:** "IETF Administrative Oversight Committee" - A largely IETF-selected committee that oversees and directs IASA. Accountable to the IETF community.

- **IAD:** "IETF Administrative Director" - The sole staff member responsible for carrying out the work of the IASA. An ISOC employee.

- **IETF Trust:** Acquires, maintains, and licenses intellectual and other property used in connection with the administration of the IETF. Same composition as IAOC.

IAOC

receives input from

oversees

works with

Committees
- Finance
- Meetings
- Tech Mgmt
- Legal
- RFP

IAD

manages contracts

works with

ISOC Support
- Sponsorship
- Communications
- Accounting
- Admin
- Contracts

Tools
- Volunteers
- Contractors

Network
- Volunteers
- Contractors

Legal

interacts with

RSE

Secretariat

Community

ISE

IANA

reviews contracts

IESG

IAB

5

Legend: **Contractor** | **ISOC** | **Community or mixed**

Structural and Organizational Issues

Workshop chairs identified structural and organizational issues:

- The **line between the IETF and ISOC is not organizationally clear-cut**, which has led to issues around transparency, allocation of staff time and priorities, budgeting, and clarity of who is responsible for what.

- The **respective roles of ISOC, the IETF chair, the IAOC, and the secretariat** in representing the IETF to sponsors and donors and communicating with them **are not clear**.

- Having ISOC represent the IETF to sponsors and donors:
  - **creates confusion** about why the IETF does not represent itself,
  - yields questions about why ISOC does not instead increase its IETF support and **how donations can be guaranteed to be dedicated to the IETF**, and
  - can result in **those soliciting sponsorships and donations having a lack of familiarity with IETF work**.

Structural and Organizational Issues

Structural/Organizational issues raised in the IASA virtual workshops:

- Delineation of roles/branding

- Control and policy authority

- Accounting structure

- Benefits of lack of rigid formality

Funding Issues

Workshop chairs identified funding issues:

- **Meeting fees are currently an important source of revenue**, but remote participation and other factors may be responsible for **declining in-person meeting attendance going forward**. Even if fees were charged for remote participation, charging the same for remote and in-person attendance is unlikely to be a viable way to make up the difference.

- While there has been a lot of **sponsor support** for, e.g., meeting hosting, getting support for the full sponsorship program is not easy. The value to sponsors is not always obvious, the IETF community is sometimes critical or unappreciative, and the same sponsors get tapped again and again for many related but different opportunities.

- **Relying heavily on meeting-based revenue is somewhat at odds** with the fact that much of the IETF's work takes place outside of in-person meetings.

- The **IETF is increasingly relying on professional services** to support its activities, causing expenses to grow.

Funding Issues

Funding issues raised in the IASA virtual workshops:

- Relevant draft: I-D.arkko-ietf-finance-thoughts

- Funding as a measure of IETF relevance

- Importance of having multiple funding streams

- Is the current mix optimal? What would be better?

- Is it still true that a major function of ISOC is to make up shortfalls?

- Can we look to other open source sponsorship funding models?

- Sponsorship is far more cumbersome than simply finding funds.

- How is funding outreach done?

Transparency and Communication Issues

Workshop chairs identified transparency/communication issues:

- **IAOC has typically been perceived to operate less transparently** than what is the norm for IETF processes and other IETF leadership bodies.

- **Lack of transparency has some roots** in concerns about confidentiality of contract terms and business relationships, and fear of community reaction to administrative decisions.

- **Requirements** from the community about IAOC transparency expectations **are not clear**.

Transparency and Communication Issues

Transparency/Communications issues raised in the IASA virtual workshops:

- IAOC and IASA could better communicate with the IETF community
  - Should the IETF community document the transparency requirement clearly? (e.g., set the default to be open and publish an exception list for confidential or sensitive matters.)
  - What is behind lack of transparency outside of proprietary/confidentiality concerns? (FONMO: fear of not missing out? lack of desire to rehash previous complex discussions?)
- Need to balance community impatience with administrivia and their desire to provide input
  - Boring details "which are boring until they're not, and then everyone is surprised."
  - Can IETF community get insight into what the IAOC is going to do, as opposed to what it has just done?

Staff and Volunteer Resource Issues

Workshop chairs identified staff/volunteer resource issues:

- **IAD workload is (much) more than a full-time job**, but we have one staff person allocated to it.

- IASA tasks touch on a wider variety of topics and **require more different kinds of expertise than 10 years ago** (visa issues, local social/political/health issues, new modes of fundraising, etc.), but the job descriptions and skill sets of staff and volunteers do not always match these needs.

- **Very few community members have the time, support, and interest to stand for the IAOC** (or even participate in administrative discussions, unless something goes astray), and many who do are self-funding their work.

Staff and Volunteer Resource Issues

Staff/Volunteer issues raised in the IASA virtual workshops:

- Do we understand the scope and authority for each committee? E.g., if a committee can make a decision that is easily overturned by the IAOC, that seems like a mismatch.

- It would be helpful to better define roles of individuals on committees and how they are chosen. E.g., what must be done by paid contractors?

- It all seems rather organically complex but not necessarily in a directed fasion (would it look like this if we consciously designed?)

Internal IAOC Organizational Issues

Workshop chairs identified internal IAOC organizational issues:

- **IAOC has constrained membership:** The IAOC has 4 ex officio members (IETF Chair, IAB Chair, ISOC CEO, IAD (non-voting)), and 5 appointed members. One of 5 members is appointed by the ISOC Board of Trustees, and is traditionally expected not to stand for IAOC Chair. This yields:
  - A small pool from which to select the IAOC Chair/IETF Trust Chair
  - Two "worker bees" for IAOC (after appointing IAOC/IETF Trust Chairs)

- **Requiring that the IAOC and the IETF Trust be constituted by the same group of people overloads the job responsibilities of both roles**, narrows the pool of individuals willing and able to serve on the IAOC, and creates the potential for conflicts in cases where the creation of Trust policies requires IAOC oversight.

- **Requiring that the IAB chair serve on the IAOC overloads the IAB Chair's job responsibilities** and narrows the pool of people willing and able to serve as IAB Chair. The same may be true for the IETF Chair.

Internal IAOC Organizational Issues

IAOC organizational issues raised in the IASA virtual workshops:

- Populating the IAOC is difficult because is there are so many leadership positions. What does a future IAOC need to look like?

    - Seems to be pretty clear that the IAOC needs to be bigger, and needs to have more general members.

    - Relying on volunteers for the IAOC's large volume of work may be unreasonable

- To the extend IAOC provides an oversight function, it is very thin in current composition

- It seems no longer "convenient" that the IAOC and Trust are heavily overlapping boddies